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Special Services at Home

**...for children with
developmental handicaps**





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Contents

The purpose 3

How the program can help 3

Who is eligible? 4

Deciding whether to apply 5

How to apply 7

Three key questions 8

The purpose

Special Services at Home is a program to help children with developmental handicaps live at home with their parents.

How the program can help

This program provides funding to obtain individual services and equipment that will aid the child's development and allow the family to function more easily. In addition to special equipment, services might include assessment of the child's condition, or the assistance of a person trained in behaviour management or in teaching daily living activities.

Funding for the Special Services at Home program is limited. Services and equipment will be provided only when these are not available from other sources and funds are available.

Funding from alternative sources might be available for part of the cost of certain equipment and services. If so, it may be possible for the remaining cost to be funded through the Special Services at Home program.

Because each situation is different, requests from parents for a service or equipment will be evaluated individually.

Who is eligible?

Any child with a documented developmental handicap who is under the age of 18 years and living at home may be eligible to receive assistance from the Special Services fund.

“Developmental handicap” is defined as “a condition of mental impairment present or occurring during a person’s formative years which is associated with limitations in adaptive behaviour”. Diagnosis of such a handicap is made by a registered psychologist or physician.

Special Services at Home is intended for children in three different groups.

- The highest priority is given to children who would probably need long-term residential services away from home if they could not obtain individual special services at home.
- Second in priority are children in residential care who could live at home if individual special services were available.
- The third group includes children living at home who need help in continuing to develop, but who are not likely to need admission to residential care even if special services are not provided.

Deciding whether to apply

The Special Services at Home program is intended to help fill gaps in available services, not to duplicate existing services. Before applying for funding, here are a few aspects that could be considered.

- Handicapped Children's Benefits is a program open to parents with handicapped children, whether or not the handicap is developmental. Information about the program is available from local or area offices of the Ministry of Community and Social Services (see the blue pages of the telephone directory).
- Requests for educational programs or support should first be referred to the local Board of Education.
- If equipment is required, first contact your physician. The Ministry of Health has an Assistive Devices program which will pay up to 75 per cent of specified, approved assistive devices. Special assistance or supplementary aid may be available through General Welfare Assistance for families who are unable to pay the remaining portion.

For equipment not funded by the Ministry of Health program, you should make application to your area office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

- For information about assistance with costs for professional services, transportation, or home modification, consult your area office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.
- If the request is to be for a special service, it must meet a need that cannot be met in another way. Each area office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services has available limited resources to fund applications for special services.

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- Costs that form part of the basic care of every child cannot be funded by the Special Services at Home program. Among these are diapers, food and clothing, babysitting, day care, routine medical care and costs, and medical fees that exceed the Ontario Hospital Insurance Plan fee schedule. Should parents be faced with extraordinary costs in providing this care, it is possible that financial assistance may be available through the Handicapped Children's Benefits program.
 - Note that the Special Services at Home funds are provided for up to six months at any one time. The services made available should be able to achieve specified goals within that time.
 - Special Services at Home funds cannot be used to provide services outside Ontario.

How to apply

The program requires that the child's parents or guardians make the application for funds to their area office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, where application forms are available. Please see the blue pages of your telephone directory.

Parents or legal guardians may complete the application form themselves or with help from an agency, a professional person, or other person of their choice.

The decision that your child is developmentally handicapped must be made by a registered psychologist or physician. Be sure to note from the application the requirement to provide documentation supporting your description of the child's condition.

The ministry will not reimburse parents for equipment or services purchased before the application has been approved in writing by the area manager.

Three key questions

The most important points in the application refer to the child's present condition, the goals for improvement, and the way that the requested special equipment or service will help the child to develop and live more easily at home. These questions may be approached as follows.

- *Describe the situation*— Explain simply and clearly the child's or family's present situation. When describing the present circumstances, explain how they create a problem or limit the child's potential for development or the family's ability to respond to the child's needs.
- *Outline the goals*— Detail a particular objective, such as having the child "dress or feed himself or herself", rather than making a general statement that it is hoped "co-ordination and dexterity will become better".
- *Indicate how the situation will improve*— Describe as fully as possible how the proposed special equipment or service will help to meet the goals described. For example, parents may request funds to purchase the assistance of a specially trained person to teach the child life skills such as feeding himself or herself, or getting ready for bed.

For more information contact the nearest area office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The telephone number will be found in the Ontario government section of the blue pages in the back of your directory.

